

Tinker personnel venture to India

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Staff Writer

Within the upcoming week, a team of 16 Tinker Air Force Base military and civilian personnel will journey to a military base on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to repair a damaged B-1 bomber using only government resources.

Exercising the Oklahoma City Air Logistic Center's motto, "War-winning capabilities on-time, on-cost," the repair team, which consists of two engineers from the 555th Aircraft Sustainment

Squadron, two mechanics from the 565th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and 12 people from the 507th Combat Logistics Sustainment Squadron, are scheduled to have the B-1 operational within 120 calendar days, according to engineering estimates, a team official said.

"The team is able to perform maintenance operations half way around the world because of its resources (and ability) to meet any challenges and to keep the warfighter in business," said Al Maeder, 555th ACSS B-1 Structures and Flight Systems, Engineering Section chief.

In early May, a B-1 flying from Dyess AFB, Texas, to Diego Garcia landed with its gear up. It skidded approximately 7,000 feet onto the runway, causing about \$8 million in damage to the aircraft.

Tinker engineers were notified within 24 hours of the incident and immediately began outlining a production plan to get the aircraft off the runway and operational again.

"We're responsible for configuration of the aircraft and responsible for getting it into flyable condition," Mr. Maeder said.

Because incidents of this type are rare,

a technical order for the repair had never been written nor was there a designated right way to fix the damage, said John Morgan, 555th ACSS B-1 structural engineer.

Engineers devised a restoration plan that differed from the traditional repair methods of removing the damaged sheet metal and fixing the problems one at a time.

Instead, engineers opted to remove the damaged sections, two nacelles that hold the engines and the nose section — and replace them with functioning pieces from a retired aircraft.

Replacement sections were selected from the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., and will be flown via C-5 to Diego Garcia Oct. 16.

"We've never removed a complete production section and reinstalled it on another aircraft," Mr. Morgan said. "But had we done the repair conventionally, it would have cost a lot more money and been much more time consuming."

Barney Magerus, 555th ACSS B-1 systems engineer, said he is sure the idea will work.

The aircraft was originally manufactured in sections across the country and assembled in Palmdale, Calif., Mr. Magerus said.

Mr. Maeder said the downed plane was moved off the runway within 39 hours of the incident, using innovative procedures developed by Mr. Morgan. The runway was operational 69 hours after the accident, he said.

"We have personnel with the expertise and experience to accomplish required repairs anytime, any place, anywhere," Mr. Maeder said. "It should be noted that all resources, both engineering and touch-labor, for the repair are being provided from Tinker."

A Tinker repair team removes a left hand nacelle from an aircraft at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. The parts will be used by the Tinker crew to repair a B-1 bomber damaged earlier this year at Diego Garcia.



The damaged aircraft was moved off the runway at Diego Garcia within 39 hours of the incident.

an Ocean to repair damaged B-1



The Tinker repair team removes the forward equipment bay from an AMARC aircraft at Davis-Monthan AFB.



Courtesy photos



Maintenance workers from Diego Garcia use inflated lift bags to stabilize the B-1's wings during the rear lift.